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C O N F I D E N T I A L KATHMANDU 002773

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [UN](#) [NP](#)
SUBJECT: PM'S FOREIGN POLICY ADVISOR UPBEAT ON PEACE TALKS

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Nicholas Dean.
Reasons 1.4 (b/d)

Summary

11. (C) PM Koirala's Foreign Policy Advisor, Dr. Suresh Chalise, was upbeat regarding the prospects for a peace deal between the (Government of Nepal) GON and Maoists in a meeting with CDA October 18. He said that the PM had instructed him to deliver a hard-line message to the UN peace team on the need to separate the Maoists from their arms in a meeting later that day. The PM's advisor believed that the Maoists are under pressure to join the GON quickly while they still have momentum and before popular resentment cuts off their avenue to power. The GON is not prepared to crack down on Maoist abuses until after the Maoists are in cantonment. The GON welcomes Indian involvement in the peace process, including the UN peace team's lightning October 17 visit to New Delhi. Chalise said the PM was confident the GON cannot be overwhelmed by the Maoists, a view, he added, many others in the GON share. End summary.

GON Maintaining Hard Line on Arms Separation

12. (C) Chalise began the discussion by noting that he had been instructed that morning by Prime Minister Koirala to deliver an uncompromising message on arms management to the UN peace team headed by Ian Martin. He said that the PM had told him to make clear to Martin that the GON rejected any suggestion of equivalence between the Nepal Army and the People's Liberation Army. The GON insists that the Maoists lay down their weapons before entering the GON, Chalise reiterated. The GON took a dim view of the proposal by the UN to consider the "Sudan model," which the PM's advisor suggested would involve Maoist entry into the GON with arms. Responding to CDA's query as to why the Maoists would contemplate surrendering their weapons, the PM's advisor declared that the Maoists recognize that they cannot win by force of arms and are eager to join the GON by alternate means.

Pressure on Maoists

13. (C) The PM's advisor argued that the Maoists enjoy little support among the Nepali people, are increasingly isolated because of their continuing criminal behavior, and smart at the opprobrium of the international community. He said that the Maoists recognized that they had a window of opportunity to enter the government and that this window was beginning to close as popular resentment of their activities increased. The GON sought to capitalize on the Maoists' eagerness to join the GON as soon as possible to extract concessions from the insurgents. Chalise added that, while differences remained between the GON and Maoists on arms management and the monarchy, the Maoists had been unequivocal in identifying "rehabilitation and reintegration" of PLA fighters as a top priority.

India, the U.S. and the International Community

14. (C) Chalise welcomed the newly active role of India in Nepal's peace process, epitomized by UN peace team leader Ian Martin's flying one-day visit to New Delhi on October 17. "Who cares what color the cat is, at long as it catches mice," he observed, welcoming the more proactive Indian stance which emerged over the weekend of October 14-15. Regarding the United States, Chalise expressed the GON's appreciation for our consistent stance on arms management and law and order. Describing the GON-Maoist peace talks as "extremely delicate," he said that continued U.S. engagement along these lines with the international community and especially "educating" the UN were vital. The PM's advisor reiterated the importance of pressure from the broader international community in curbing the more egregious excesses of the Maoists and in motivating them to moderate their behavior in order to enter the government.

Law and Order: Not Yet-----

15. (C) Pressed by CDA on the need to restore law and order, especially outside Kathmandu, the PM's advisor emphasized that the GON recognizes the problem but does not believe that the time is ripe for action yet. The advisor repeated earlier claims that the GON has a plan to restore law and order, beginning with replacement of the Home Minister, but cannot do so until after peace talks are concluded successfully and the PLA is in cantonment. He underscored the fact that Nepalis have suffered the ravages of an insurgency for over a decade, emphasizing that Nepalis would be more than willing to endure three or four months of lawlessness in order to secure a lasting peace. Regarding the threat posed by the Maoist militia, Chalise discounted estimates that they number as many as 100,000 and said that the problem was manageable.

Tension Down, GON Alert, Summit after Tihar

16. (C) Dr. Chalise agreed that tension levels related to the insurgency in Nepal and the prospect of a violent Maoist uprising had decreased markedly in recent weeks. He conceded that this might be the result of a combination of wishful thinking and sharply reduced rhetoric on the part of the Maoists. Talks are ongoing at the GON-Maoist negotiating team level. Pleasant as this was, the PM's advisor emphasized, the GON remained wary of Maoist intentions, although hopeful that the variety of forces pushing the Maoists toward the political mainstream would carry the day. Chalise expected summit talks to resume after Tihar. (Note: The last day of Tihar is October 24. End note.) He emphasized that Prime Minister Koirala would maintain a hard line on arms management, expressing appreciation for CDA's underscoring of U.S. support for the GON.

Comment

17. (C) The most striking part of Chalise's remarks was the calm confidence which he exuded. Judging by his foreign policy advisor's assessment as well as his own public

pronouncements, Prime Minister Koirala's government appears confident that it cannot be overwhelmed by the Maoists. Equally telling, however, were the advisor's repeated references to the importance of external support in bolstering the GON and external pressure in helping to drive the Maoists toward an acceptable peace deal. The powerful effect of India's entry into the fray, the development of the day which has Kathmandu's chattering classes agog, testifies to the continued importance of robust U.S. engagement at this critical juncture. U.S. support should continue to take the form of backstopping the GON while respecting the delicacy of the current phase of peace negotiations. Equally importantly, U.S. activity should include continued engagement with other diplomatic actors here (India in particular, the UK and EU countries), and especially the UN.

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